

Budget Unit Brief FY 2017

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Water Quality Monitoring

Purpose and History

Since 2001, the General Assembly has made an annual appropriation from the Environment First Fund to support the water quality monitoring stations operated by the [Ambient Water Quality Monitoring Program](#) in the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Monitoring efforts are administered by the Watershed Monitoring and Assessment Section that designs, implements, and manages water quality monitoring efforts. The program's mission "is to develop and deliver consistent, unbiased information about the condition of Iowa's surface and groundwater resources so that decisions regarding the development, management, and protection of these resources may be improved."

Appropriated dollars are allocated for the administration, research, and operation of water quality monitoring stations. In addition to Department expertise, the DNR contracts with experts from the U.S. Geological Survey and state universities for water quality research, analysis, and modeling. The appropriation supports six water quality monitoring programs described below. Water samples are collected to develop a baseline of information on Iowa streams, lakes, and wetlands. The DNR tracks water temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, and many other physical conditions and chemicals. The Monitoring Section records [fish kills](#) and statewide water data and assesses the ability of water bodies to meet their intended uses (impaired waters) as defined by the Federal Clean Water Act. [IOWATER](#), a volunteer water monitoring program, is also coordinated by the Monitoring Section. Publications that provide information about water quality monitoring information are updated as needed.

Monitoring Programs Supported

- [Beach Monitoring](#): The Department regularly monitors state park and several locally managed beaches during summer months. The DNR posts advisory signs when beaches exceed bacteria standards.
- [Biological Monitoring](#): The DNR, in cooperation with the State Hygienic Laboratory at the University of Iowa, collects samples and assesses the ecological health of streams across Iowa.
- [Groundwater Monitoring](#): Most Iowans rely on groundwater for their drinking water. The DNR maintains a groundwater monitoring network across the state and uses this network to record water levels in major aquifers.
- [Lake Monitoring](#): Since 2000, this program samples 131 recreational lakes for chemical, physical, and biological conditions. The DNR contracts with the State Hygienic Laboratory and Iowa State University to collect samples.
- [Stream Monitoring](#): Since 2000, the DNR has monitored about 80 stream sites for a variety of chemical and physical conditions. These efforts include monitoring 23 sites, both upstream and downstream, of 10 major cities. Streams are monitored on a monthly basis, and data is available online. The DNR works with the State Hygienic Laboratory to collect samples at these sites.
- [Wetland Monitoring](#): Beginning in 2005, the DNR began monitoring wetlands in north central Iowa. Monitoring efforts track physical, chemical, and biological threats to wetlands and record the positive benefits of wetlands.

Funding History

Since 2001, the General Assembly has appropriated \$3.0 million annually to the DNR for water quality monitoring.

Related Statutes

Iowa Code chapters [455B](#)

[571](#) Iowa Administrative Code chapter [61](#)

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More Information

Department of Natural Resources: <http://www.iowadnr.gov>

Iowa General Assembly: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/>

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